Lack of secure communication system in Cheetah/Chetak Helicopters

1692. SHRI S. RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the majority of Cheetah/Chetak helicopter fleet was operating without secure communication system;

(b) whether 45 communication system sets were procured at a cost of Rs. 7.15 crore during November, 1997 for fitting in these helicopters, but a lot of them have not been installed even though their warranty period is over and these helicopters are still operating without secure communication system; and

(c) if so, what are the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) The communication sets procured for fitment on Cheetah Helicopters are for long-range communication. While some of these sets have been installed, the rest are in the process. The delay of fitment has taken place due to continuous involvement of these helicopters in operation/logistic task.

***In situ* promotions to assistants and UDCs of AFHQ**

1693. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a proposal to grant *in situ* promotions to Assistants and UDCs of AFHQ is under consideration of Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the same has been sent to the DoP and T for approval;

(d) if so, the reaction of that Department; and

(e) the specific reasons leading the AFHQ authorities to recommend their cases when almost all other cadres are facing acute stagnation?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES); (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (e) Do not arise.

Procedure for promotion of Army Officers

1694. SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the procedures and parameters adopted for promotion of Army Officers;

(b) whether it is a fact that several excellent officers who played admirable role in Kargil have been left out and some officers named in Tehelka have been promoted;

(c) if so, the reasons for the same; and

(d) what steps are being taken to correct this undesirable situation?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES) (a) to (c) Promotion of officers in the Army is to two categories *i.e.* the category of Non-Select ranks Captain, Major and Lieutenant Colonel (Time Scale) and the category of Select ranks *i.e.* Lieutenant Colonel (by selection),[v]Co!onel, Brigadier, Major General and Lieutenant General.

Promotion to Non-Select ranks is on the basis of time stipulation provided the mandatory qualitative requirements are satisfied.

The procedure for promotion of Army Officers to select ranks is governed by Paragraph 108 of the Regulations of the Army under which the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) is empowered to convene Selection Boards. Promotion to select ranks is by a system of screening by independent Selection Boards constituted from select officers based on their operational and staff experiences, based on inputs available from records of an officer. Suitability for promotion is based upon value judgement of members of Selection Boards on the basis of data examined from the overall reckonable records of past performance and potential of the officer. Selection made is based on vacancies available and on comparative merit. Selection Board proceedings for the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and Colonel are approved by the COAS under delegated powers. Similar proceedings for promotion to ranks of Brigadier, Major General and Lieutenant General are approved at the level of Government.

Fairness in Selection Boards is ensured by not disclosing the identity of the officer under consideration for promotion upto the rank of Brigadier. Different officers are incorporated as observers to witness the Board proceedings so as to bring about transparency and objectivity. No officer named in Tehelka episode has so far been promoted.

(d) Selection procedures in the Army are time tested and proven over the years.